

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 AGR-20 COME-00 TRSE-00 EB-11

SAM-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 DRC-01 /125 W

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R 300427Z MAY 74

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0900

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0900

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAGR CH

SUBJECT: NORTH CHINA CROP CONDITIONS

1. USLO HAS RECEIVED A CANADIAN REPORT WHICH INDICATES THAT, AS OF THE END OF MARCH, THE OUTLOOK FOR THIS YEAR'S WINTER WHEAT HARVEST IN CHINA WAS BELOW THAT OF LAST YEAR. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, TOTAL WINTER WHEAT PRODUCTION IN SHENSI, SHANSI AND KANSU, WHICH ACCOUNT FOR ABOUT 20 PERCENT OF CHINA'S ANNUAL WINTER WHEAT OUTPUT, WILL PROBABLY BE ABOUT THE SAME AS LAST YEAR, WITH CROPS IN SHENSI POSSIBLY BETTER THAN A YEAR AGO. IN HOPEI, HONAN, SHANTUNG, ANHWEI, HUPEI AND KIANGSU, HOWEVER, THE REPORT INDICATES THAT BETWEEN LAST FALL AND THIS MARCH, PRECIPITATION IN WINTER WHEAT GROWING AREAS WAS LESS THAN IN THE PRECEDING YEAR, AND CROPS ARE NOT EXPECTED TO BE AS GOOD AS 1973.

2. USLO INFORMATION ON PRECIPITATION IN THE ABOVE NAMED AREAS IS VERY FRAGMENTARY, BUT WHAT LITTLE WE HAVE WOULD TEND TO BEAR OUT THE CANADIAN REPORT. ON A TRIP
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LAST WEEK, A USLO OFFICER WAS TOLD BY CHINESE IN SIAN

THAT THERE WAS PLENTY OF MOISTURE THERE, AND HE OBSERVED THAT CROPS SEEMED IN GOOD SHAPE. IN A LATE DECEMBER TRIP TO HONAN, USLO DC HOLDRIDGE NOTED THAT NORTHERN HONAN WAS GETTING VERY DRY AND THAT THE SITUATION COULD BECOME SERIOUS IF NO RAIN WERE FORTHCOMING (PEKING 0038). IN EARLY MAY, A USLO OFFICER TRAVELING THROUGH HONAN BY TRAIN FOUND CONDITIONS QUITE DRY DOWN TO THE HWAI RIVER. ANOTHER USLO OFFICER TRAVELING BY TRAIN THROUGH SHANTUNG AND ANHWEI IN EARLY MAY NOTED CONDITIONS VERY DRY THERE ALSO. IN PEKING, RAIN FELL HEAVILY IN THE AFTERNOON OF MAY 29 AND WELL INTO THE NIGHT, BUT THIS WAS THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT RAIN TO FALL HERE SINCE LAST YEAR AND IT PROBABLY CAME TOO LATE TO SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER THE OUTLOOK FOR WINTER WHEAT LOCALLY.

3. UNTIL RECENTLY WE HAD NOT HEARD FROM LOCAL CHINESE CONTACTS THE EXPRESSIONS OF ANXIETY OVER DROUGHT IN NORTH CHINA THAT WERE SO WIDESPREAD HERE LAST YEAR. LATELY, HOWEVER, SUCH COMMENTS HAVE BEEN INCREASING. MOST SIGNIFICANT OF ALL IN VIEW OF THE CZVROVAN REPORT WAS A COMMENT MADE MAY 28 BY MFT THIRD DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR CHENG TO-PIN TO THE AUSTRALIAN COMMERCIAL COUNSELOR IN PEKING. ASKED HOW THIS YEAR'S WINTER WHEAT CROP WOULD BE, CHENG SAID IT WOULD BE "GOOD, BUT NOT AS GOOD AS LAST YEAR."

4. NB: THE CANADIAN REPORT TO WHICH WE REFER WAS OBTAINED WITH THE CAVEAT THAT USG PERSONNEL SHOULD NOT REFER TO IT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING CANADIAN PERSONNEL.
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